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Big River

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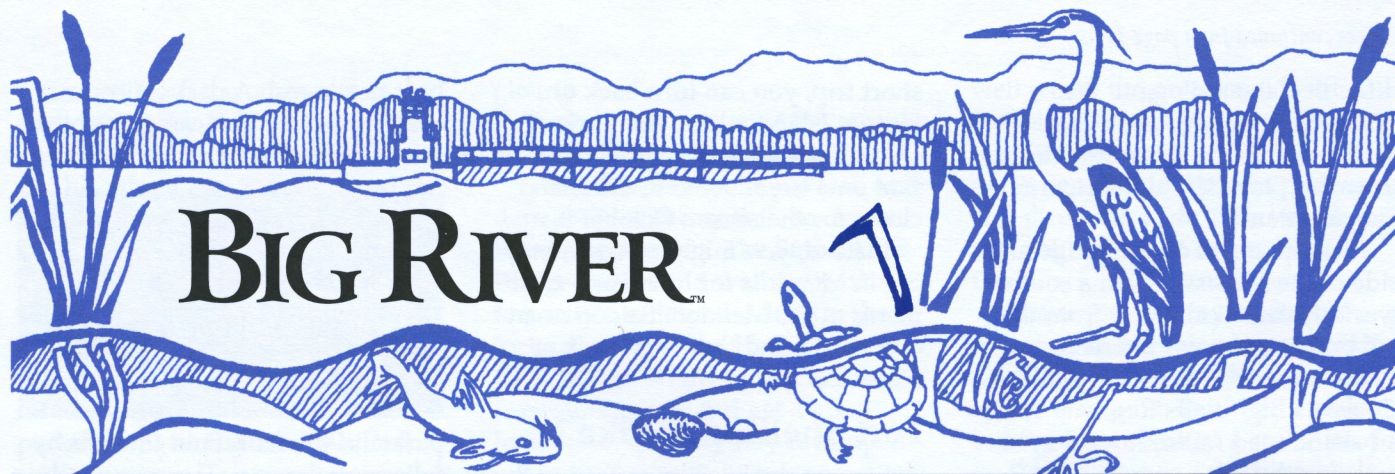
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October 1999

The monthly newsletter for people who live, work or play on the Upper Mississippi River

Vol. 7, No. 10 \$2.75

Mussels Hold up Dike

By Madelon Wise

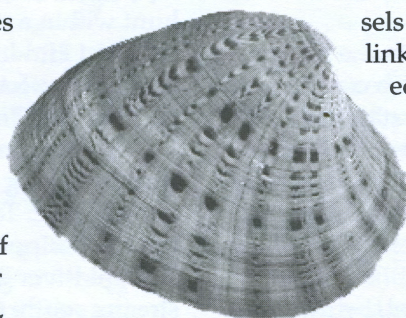
With its long history of problems, Lock and Dam 3, upstream from Red Wing, Minnesota, is once again in the environmental news. In the 1930s when the Army Corps of Engineers first proposed the dam, it immediately found itself in a dispute about the surrounding land. The wealthy members of the Diamond Bluff Associates hunt club took the Corps to court and gained a "temporary" compromise relocation of the dam for which the Corps built a series of spot dikes with roller gates. Over the years, the Corps has added riprap to shore up the spot dikes, while the hunt club built two other dikes, which it maintains for duck habitat (see *Big River*, March 1999).

The Corps, concerned about the stability of the spot dikes, planned to begin building a new dike system this autumn. Before work can begin, the Corps needs a permit from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), who along with environmental groups, questions the need for the new embankment.

"For 64 years, the dike system has held," says the DNR's Gretchen Benjamin, who warns that if the Corps followed through on its plan, "We would lose 27 acres of floodplain forest, nine acres of river habitat, and three acres of emergent wetland."

The Lock and Dam 3 area is abundant with fish, and because the lives of fish and mussels are intricately linked, the DNR insisted that the Corps search for mussels there. In May, after completing its environmental impact statement, the Corps conducted an initial survey with a mussel sled, a device pulled behind a boat.

When the survey found mussels, the Corps conducted a diving study, which according to Gary Palesh of the St. Paul Corps District, discovered a "rather rich and diverse mussel bed." The divers discovered 26 different species of mussels. Six of the most common species made up 99 percent of the catch: threeridge, three horn, pimpleback, pigtoe, deertoe and maple leaf. The survey revealed three species that are threatened in Wis-



Butterfly mussel (*Ellipsaria lineolata*)

Bicycling the Urban River

By Marc Hequet

Is the city the worst place to bike? Easily, if you're commuting by bicycle. But for recreation, some of the best Mississippi River bike trails are in Minneapolis and St. Paul, hidden in glades where urban mania seems far away.

Just minutes away from the crime, sirens and governor's residence, paved trails wind past the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers in areas that are utterly wild.

Big Rivers Trail

Park at Harriet Island across the Mississippi from downtown St. Paul. Finding Harriet Island is a bit (Bicycling continues on page 2)

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difficult. Take Kellogg to the Wabasha Bridge, go southeast across the bridge, away from downtown, and turn left at the sign for Harriet Island.

Bike upstream on the southeast side of the Mississippi, in a southerly direction, away from the tall buildings across the river.

Soon you will link with Dakota County's Big Rivers Regional Trail, an abandoned rail right-of-way hugging the Mississippi's south bank for about three miles to the historic hamlet of Mendota.

This is the best trail in the Twin Cities for its combination of river view, bluffs and wildlife. It's nearly level, except for a few exciting swoops. That makes it okay for kids and one-speed bikes.

In some places this trail is so close to the river that two sections required detours last spring during



Illustration © 1999 www.arttoday.com

high water. Elsewhere the trail gently climbs high enough for a superb view of watercourse and waterfowl, particularly where the trail passes the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers.

Look out for eastern hognose snakes sunning themselves on the asphalt. They're harmless. And they're protected. Don't run one over.

In tiny Mendota, if you want a

short trip, you can turn back to Harriet Island where you parked. (Alas, the No Wake Cafe, a restaurant on a tug moored at the island, closes for the season October 3.)

Instead, you might consider staying in Mendota for lunch or refreshments at the Mendota Saloon or another spot, and then turn back or blaze on.

Fort Snelling & Pike Is.

Stay on the Big Rivers Trail to the Mendota Bridge. Here you must cut across a two-lane Highway 13, so be careful.

The view from the bridge is spectacular. You can see why Col. Josiah Snelling chose the west promontory for his namesake fort to keep an eye out for British wandering south from Canada.

The rebuilt fort's staff, clad in 1820s regalia, assure you that John Quincy Adams is president, even if you're merely asking where to find a bathroom. And the gunners occasionally point the cannon at Col. Snelling's house and discharge it. Don't worry, they claim to be shooting blanks.

Below the fort, go to the Savage Center (it's named for a conservation enthusiast, not a state of mind) and ask how to get to the Minnehaha Trail. First, though, you might cycle the river bottom in the park, with its towering cottonwoods and placid watercourses. Bikes are not allowed on Pike Island, by the way. You can lock your bike and hike Pike, a two-mile-long island that marks the Mississippi-Minnesota confluence.

Minnehaha Trail

The Minnehaha Trail spins out of Fort Snelling State Park through thick woods, running very gently uphill about two miles, back to civilization and Minnehaha Park in Minneapolis, near 54th Street.

This is where protesters are fighting the Highway 55 reroute. If you can find a cop or protester, stop and confirm directions. You want to

bear northwest. A park officer may assure you that you can go right past a dead-end sign to get to the

The pretty falls make a fine backdrop for a photo of you in your bicycle shorts.

park and the falls. Find the falls by following the roar. The pretty falls make a fine backdrop for a photo of you in your bicycle shorts.

At the park's northwest corner, at 46th Street, you can take a look at Lock and Dam 2. The observation deck is on the Minneapolis side, near Minnehaha Park. But the St. Paul side, across the Ford Bridge, offers a good view as well.

Hidden Falls & Crosby

Once across the Ford Bridge (a busy four-lane, so be careful) bikers can turn south along Mississippi River Boulevard toward Hidden Falls Regional Park.

Here's a real St. Paul scavenger hunt within a scavenger hunt. Can you find Hidden Falls Park? And once you've found it, can you find Hidden Falls?

If you're coming in cold rather than following the route above, here's a clue: Take Ford Parkway to the Mississippi, and then take Mississippi River Boulevard downstream, south, from Ford Parkway. Or, from another direction, take Shepard Road upstream, in a southerly direction away from downtown St. Paul, along the Mississippi to where it turns into Mississippi River Boulevard. Then watch for one of the park's two entrances on the river side of the winding, two-lane boulevard.

Caution: There's a real killer of a hill at the north, upstream, entrance to the park, going downhill into the park. ("No biking on hill," a sign says, likely because bikes zipping down the hill would enter the park at about 40 miles an hour.)

Depart from the other end of the park, at Crosby Nature Center; it is less of a climb.

This whole area is lovely, and rivals the view from the opposite bank, on the Big Rivers Trail. You're in the river bottoms on the Hidden Falls side, so you have less of a view but more stretches of beach.

After biking on a riverside trail for about three miles from your parking area at Hidden Falls Park,

gle trip.

Two shorter side trips for another weekend:

- Don't miss the double lock and dam at St. Anthony Falls in downtown Minneapolis. The Stone Arch Bridge, a bike and walking path, formerly a rail trestle, divides the locks. Park near the Hennepin Avenue Bridge on the opposite bank from downtown and get a good look at the falls, entirely revamped

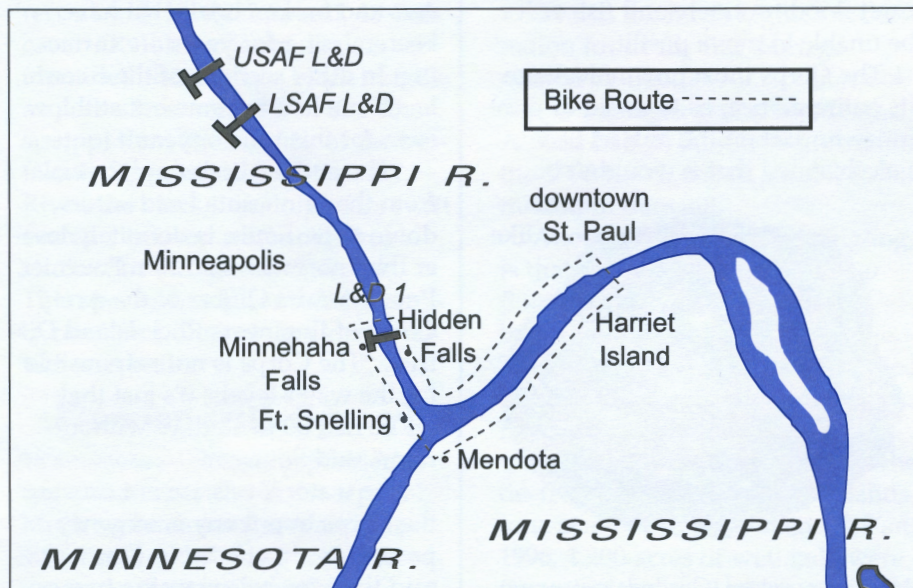
well worth the occasional heart-stopping Tour de France wannabe blowing past in dead silence at 40 miles per hour, or drivers parking and throwing wide their vehicle door right in front of you, is just this:

The sequence of splendid old houses and sweeping lawns continues almost unbroken for five miles all the way to St. Paul Cathedral.

Stop for a break at a coffee joint on Grand Avenue, which parallels Summit one block to the south.

Finally, and this is important, follow Summit back to the river just in time for sunset at the overlook where the avenue meets the Mississippi. Here above its confluence with the Minnesota, the Mississippi is still a pretty, delicate stream. In the sunset you will see a rare sight: downtown Minneapolis from afar, the otherwise ugly towers of commerce fired crimson, actually beautiful. ■■■

Marc Hequet is a writer who lives in St. Paul.



you'll encounter a network of trails under looming river-bottom forest. Crosby Farm Regional Park's trails wind through forest and slough to another parking area on Shepard Road.

Any one of those legs would make a not-too-taxing afternoon outing. Stalwart bikers can easily string two or more together in a sin-

gle trip. from the natural feature Dakota Indians showed Father Hennepin in 1680. It's still pretty.

But don't be lured onto Hennepin Avenue. It has a bike path, to be sure, but the path is like a desert wadi, rising suddenly out of nowhere, running its course for a few hundred yards, and then vanishing in a swirl of bus fumes, leaving bikers all but naked dead center in five or six lanes of downtown traffic.

- For another side trip, park on St. Paul's Summit Avenue between the river and the University of St. Thomas. Bike either way on Mississippi River Blvd. Or, if you prefer high civilization, climb the little hill on Summit back up to Cretin Avenue and head east, away from the river, on Summit. It is a two-way-bike trail for the entire route on this stately avenue.

What makes Summit Avenue



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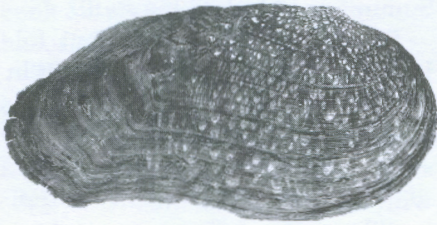
(Mussels continued from page 1)

consin, (monkeyface, wartyback and buckhorn) and one Wisconsin-listed endangered species, the butterfly.

Barge Safety

Before launching into any big construction project at Lock and Dam 3, the DNR wants the Corps to deal with such persistent problems as the outdraft here.

"The outdraft problem at this location is



Buckhorn mussel (*Tritogonia verrucosa*)

considered one of the more dangerous navigation conditions on the Upper Mississippi River for downbound traffic," according to Tom Novak of the St. Paul District.

Water velocity at this site picks up on the outside of the bend, causing the current to drag downbound tows toward the gates rather than the lock. The DNR has urged the Corps to work on the outdraft problem



Wartyback mussel (*Quadrula nodulata*)

with such proposed solutions as helper boats that push the barge from the side and concrete structures that cut down on the current. Three barge accidents have occurred at this site. In 1993, a grain barge broke away, blocked the gates

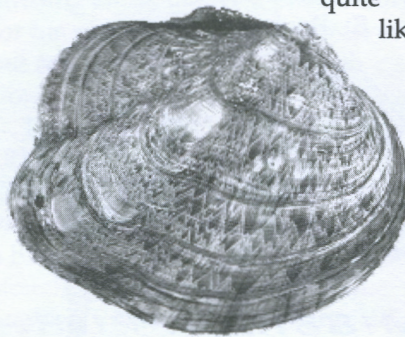
and raised the water level enough to cause bank erosion.

Fish Passage

Additionally, the DNR wants to maintain opportunities for fish to migrate around the dam. The DNR has tracked radio-tagged walleyes to Gattenbein Lake, and according to Benjamin, they "don't want to create a fish trap with any new dikes." If a structure is too high, it can't flood routinely and fish will be unable to move past it.

The Corps must now reevaluate its entire plan so as to avoid or minimize impact on the mussel bed. Palesh stated that it wouldn't be quite

like



Monkeyface mussel (*Quadrula metanevra*)

starting over because "we have a lot of data;" rather, they will be "stepping back and looking for alternatives." The Corps is planning a series of scoping meetings with such interested parties as the DNR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota-Wisconsin Boundary Area Commission.

Benjamin stressed the need for all parties to look at the entire situation rather than dealing with individual components. For instance, "They need to look at the outdraft in relationship to the spot dike. This will cost the taxpayers less, and will create minimal impact on the resources." ■■■

Madelon Wise is an associate editor of Big River.

Mussel photographs courtesy of the Illinois Natural History Survey.

Low Fall

By Mi Ae Lipe-Butterbrodt

In case you haven't noticed, the Mississippi and Illinois River are running a bit shallow these days, in some areas the lowest they've been in years.

Thanks to a drought that began late this summer, parts of the Mississippi are so low that in Memphis, cars and broken boats that have been missing for years are surfacing. In other sections of the river, levels are less extreme but still low, even for this time of year.

"The entire Mississippi River, from the Minnesota headwaters down to St. Louis, is definitely lower than normal," said Ron Fournier, Public Affairs Officer of the Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District. "The Corps is not responsible for the water levels; it's just that we've had 30 to 45 days without rain," said Fournier.

The water levels are not causing the Corps to put any emergency procedures in effect, but Fournier said the agency is warning barges not to fill to capacity, as a precautionary measure.

Sandy McDowell, owner of the Mid-Town Marina in East Dubuque, said the lower water levels make the boat ramps a little steeper, but that recreational boating navigation there has not been affected. Traffic has actually increased, she said, because the water levels expose more beaches. ■■■

Mi Ae Lipe-Butterbrodt is an associate editor of Big River.



Current Events

By Madelon Wise

Big, Black Buffalo

Iowa — While fishing for walleye in Pool 9, Jim Winters of Jesup, Iowa, caught more than he bargained for. Winters set a new state record with his 62.5-pound, 48-inch catch. DNR fisheries biologists identified the fish as a black buffalo, a species less common in the Mississippi than other forms of the buffalo. Indigenous to the Missouri River, the black buffalo prefers swift currents in deep water over substrates of sand, gravel and rock. This species has become increasingly rare since the lock-and-dam system was built.

Flooded with Sprawl

Minnesota — Flooding problems have become worse in the Upper Midwest because of wetlands destruction and urban sprawl, according to a report from the Sierra Club's Midwest office. The report details data collected on wetland destruction permits issued by the Army Corps of Engineers in Minnesota. Of these requests for permits, 99 percent were approved. The report also documents that in areas declared federal flood disasters, 93 percent of permits had been approved.

The Corps claims that it creates new wetlands for wetlands destroyed, but Ginny Yingling, director of the Sierra Club's North Star Chapter, says that the mitigation claims deceive the public. Corps permits allow the destruction of functioning wetland, while the Corps builds "storm water run-off ponds" that do not provide the same water purification or absorption of run-off as a natural wetland.

The report also analyzes how many wetlands must be restored to control flooding. If 2.1 million acres

of wetland were restored in Minnesota, states the report, that would have held all of the 1993 flood water.

In the last 10 years, Minnesota ranked as the ninth highest in the nation for death and damage caused by floods — 1.7 billion dollars in damages and seven deaths. Almost half of these were related to the 1993 flood, which caused \$534 million in damage.

Another problem, says Yingling, is that the maps for the 100-year floodplain on which the Corps bases its decisions are out of date. These maps have not been updated to include the effects of development on the floodplain.

No mitigation is required for the destruction of very small wetlands (one acre or less). Between 1988 and 1996, 1,200 acres of wetlands were destroyed and not replaced under this provision.

The report is available to the public through the Sierra Club's Midwest office, (608) 257-4994.

Hard Rain

Heavy rainstorms have become progressively more frequent in the Midwest since the 1930s, especially in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois and Michigan. The frequency of heavy downpours has increased 4.6 percent a decade, and the frequency of weeklong rains increased by 2.9 percent a decade, according to an article in the August issue of the *Journal of Climate*.

Bellevue Park Grows

Bellevue, Iowa — The Iowa Natural Resource Commission is purchasing a 154-acre parcel to add to Bellevue State Park. This land is being added through the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act Open

Space Program, which receives about \$1.5 million annually to acquire land for public use. The Department of Natural Resources is planning to plant trees and possibly turn some of the fields into prairie.

Refuge Advice Sought

You have until November 7, 1999, to tell the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service what you think about public uses of its refuges. The Service has drafted a compatibility policy and regulations, and for the first time invited the public to comment on refuge use.

The 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act requires the Service to outline a process for reviewing proposed and existing public use. Managers must consider the mission of the entire refuge system along with the plan for individual refuges. Managers must also consider the compatibility of recreational activities with wildlife conservation. Hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation are the "priority public" uses spelled out in the 1997 law.

You can find the proposed compatibility policy and regulations on the Internet at www.refuges.fws.gov. Send your written comments to Chief, Division of Refuges, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203, or email Compatibility_Policy_Comments@fws.gov.

Also, you can still send in your opinions about the role of habitat for endangered and threatened species. The Service is exploring ways to develop critical habitat while benefitting as many species as possible. Comments can be sent until October 29, 1999, to Chief, Di-

vision of Endangered Species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Mailstop ARLSQ-420, Washington, DC 20240.

Peregrines Persist

Dubuque, Iowa — Irene Barry, a University of Dubuque student, presented a poster paper on peregrine falcons at the international meeting of the Association of Field Ornithologists in Ottumwa, Iowa. Barry's work documents her involvement with the Iowa Peregrine Falcon Recovery Committee at Dubuque. The committee has released 21 birds in Dubuque and its goal is to have five nesting pairs of peregrine falcons in Iowa next year.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt removed the peregrine falcon from the endangered species list in a ceremony on August 20 in Boise, Idaho. Driven to the brink of extinction by pesticides, the world's fastest bird has made a comeback, with the greatest numbers in California, Utah and Arizona. Falcon experts say that banning DDT and similar pesticides has saved the falcon and other raptors, such as the bald eagle.

Lotsa Ducks

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 1999 annual survey of key nesting areas for breeding ducks revealed great news: the population of breeding ducks rose by 11 percent, to 43.4 million this year.

"It's heartening to see duck populations at these impressive levels. While improved habitat and weather had much to do with the improvement, wetland restoration efforts deserve a good share of the credit," said acting Service director John Rogers. "For the fourth time in five years, we enjoy record duck populations, but the need for continued habitat conservation has not diminished."

Tim Bremicker, chief of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Section of Wildlife said that the duck status looks very good

throughout the state, with projections indicating record highs, particularly for Canada geese. He is concerned about declines in the woodcock population, as well as general concern about the lesser scaup, according to an interview in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (9-9-99).

The scaup limit was cut from six to three this year, as its population is below the goal set by the North American Waterfowl Plan. Bremicker cites "the lack of adequate foundation for funding quality programs" as the biggest threat to wildlife in Minnesota. He also says that development and the decline in family farms pose threats to wildlife.

Hunters, remember that, with the exception of wild turkeys, you must use nontoxic shot for all upland small game and migratory birds when hunting on any National Wildlife Refuge. You have a choice of six nontoxic shots: tungsten-iron, tungsten-polymer, tungsten-matrix, tin, steel or bismuth-tin. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has approved these kinds of shot after finding that animals and birds can ingest them without apparent harm.

Contact the La Crosse District Office at 555 Lester Avenue, Onalaska, WI 54650, or call (608) 783-8405 for information about hunting or fishing programs on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, permits, special conditions, nontoxic shot requirements and maps.

Deadly River

Wisconsin — Twenty-two people drowned in the Lower Wisconsin River in the last decade, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Between Portage and Prairie du Chien, the Wisconsin River appears calm, but is in fact deep and full of strong currents. The strong currents cause the bottom to drop drastically near the sandbars favored by campers. Most of the drowning victims have

been tourists who are not aware of the river's perilous reputation.

Crooked Again

Weaver, Minn. — In September heavy equipment operators closed off a human-made ditch and opened a dike, allowing the lower Whitewater River to resume its natural course. Three miles of straight ditch constructed in the 1950s created the Dorer Pools. In subsequent years, the trench gradually filled in.

The restoration of the natural winding channel, funded by Legislative Commission of Minnesota Resources, will improve water quality, fishing and canoeing. The restored course is also expected to reduce flooding and erosion. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources restored a three-quarter mile stretch of the Whitewater in August, and plans to sample the river next year to see if fishing has improved.

City Biking

Twin Cities — If you're looking for mountain bike trails in the Twin Cities, check out Steve Johnson's new guide to mountain biking in Minneapolis-St. Paul. The handbook will fit in a pocket, sells for \$9.95 and features maps, directions and descriptions for 21 trails, several in the Minnesota River Valley, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (8-19-99).

The Minnesota Department of Transportation, the City of Minneapolis, Quality Bikes and the developer working on the old Sears building on Lake Street are studying the idea of creating a European-style bike hub at this site, featuring bikes, showers, storage and a repair shop.

Rapid River

A whitewater course in downtown Minneapolis? It could happen, according to a feasibility study completed for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The study proposes what is essentially a

new river channel that bypasses the lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam. Using the vertical drop created by the lock and dam and Mississippi River water, the channel would be approximately 2,000 feet long and 40 feet wide, with a vertical drop of about 25 feet.

Commercial rafting and boating and other whitewater events could



The newly constructed islands (upper right) near Stoddard, Wis., were dedicated in September.

bring an estimated \$2 to \$2.5 million annually from visitors and course users. The project, along with extensions of the East River Road and bike trails, would join the surrounding neighborhoods to the river, to downtown and to the Twin Cities' extensive parkway and trail system, according to the study.

The whitewater course and park shown in the master plan includes roads, parking, trails, pedestrian bridges, a fishing pier and other park amenities. A combination of public and private entities would manage the park, which would be geared for four-season operation. The proposal envisions increased access to the Mississippi River and revitalization of the surrounding neighborhoods. The feasibility study now goes to the Minnesota Legislature for further considera-

tion.

New Islands Celebrated

Stoddard, Wis. — About 100 people gathered under a huge tent on Friday, September 17 to celebrate the completion of 13 new islands built in the Mississippi River at Stoddard. Senior citizens, sport coated politicians, uniformed government employees and assorted citizens gathered to dedicate the Phase II Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project islands on Pool 8.

Captain John Weidner, Deputy District Engineer of the Army Corps of Engineers, briefly explained the habitat rehabilitation component of the Environmental Management Program (EMP), and in particular Phase II, which began in 1993 with public meetings in which the Corps and partners solicited input from the public.

Contractor J. F. Brennan excavated the 210,000 cubic yards of dredged sand and 65,000 cubic yards of fines excavated from Crosby's Slough to build the five islands and eight seed islands in and around Stoddard Bay. Glen Green, from J. F. Brennan, spoke about the challenges of hydraulically dredging the sand and pumping topsoil on top of the sand to maintain the proper gradation for eventual seeding and tree planting. The seed islands are designed to catch sediment, gradually growing into larger islands, thus allowing natural river processes to restore habitat.

Congressman Ron Kind (Wis. 3rd Dist.) made a surprise visit as Congress shut down unexpectedly because of Hurricane Floyd. Kind, a proponent of the EMP, formed the bipartisan Mississippi River Caucus with Congressman Gil Gutnecht (Minn. 1st Dist.). Kind set the tone by praising the team effort that brought the Phase II islands to completion and stressing the importance of restoring wildlife habitat in "our nation's greatest treasure." All of the speakers echoed Kind as they

talked about the cooperation between the Corps, Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, contractors, and citizens.

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge sponsored a contest in August and September 1998 to select names for the islands. They received over 350 entries. The five new islands are Eagle, Slingshot, Greenwing, Sunfish and Pasque. The eight seed island names are Mussel, Pelican, Sunset, Mudcat, Tadpole, Otter, Redwing and Crane.

Malcolm Clark, private citizen and river rat, recalled the former grandeur of Stoddard Bay and its gradual and thorough decline. Clark, who cut the ceremonial ribbon at the end of the dedication, spoke for the assembly by saying, "It is my hope that these islands will stay here to sustain the wildlife and offer much pleasure to generations to come."

Do the Dunes

Cottage Grove, Minn. — Take a special fall hike at the latest protected example of presettlement habitat open to the public. Overlooking the backwaters of the Mississippi, the Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area contains more than 200 native grasses and wildflower species. The dunes area was given to the Department of Natural Resources through an agreement with Marathon Ashland Petroleum, state and federal officials, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (7-24-99).

To get to the Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area from St. Paul, follow U.S. 61 south to Jamaica Avenue; go south to 100th Street; then west to Ideal Avenue. Go south on Ideal Avenue to 110th Street. Follow 110th Street west to the end of the road. Enjoy! 🌳



River Calendar

Special Events & Festivals

October

- 1-31 Big River Journey Art Contest art-works display, Fort Snelling, St. Paul, Minn., (612) 725-2724.
- 1-7 Oktoberfest, La Crosse, Wis., 1-800-658-9424.
- 2 Annual Hawk Watch, 8 a.m., Pikes Peak State Park, McGregor, Iowa, (319) 873-2341.
- 2 Sap to Syrup, Stonefield Village, Cassville, Wis., (608) 725-5210.
- 2-3 Putting By For Winter, Sat., 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sun., 11:30 a.m. - 5 p.m., Fort Snelling, St. Paul, Minn., (612) 726-1171.
- 2-3 Johnny Appleseed Days, Lake City, Minn., 1-800-369-4123.
- 2-3 Arts and Crafts Festival, McGregor, Iowa, 1-800-896-0910.
- 2-3 Flea Market, Marquette, Iowa, 1-800-896-0910.
- 2-3 Shihata Orchard Fest, Prairie du Chien, Iowa, 1-800-732-1673.
- 3 Art Along the River, Bellevue, Iowa, 1-800-653-2211.
- 9 Greening the Great River Park celebration, noon, St. Paul, Minn., (651) 224-9885.
- 9 Mississippi River Volksmarch, Wabasha, Minn., (651) 565-4158.
- 9 Masonic Fish Fry, 4 p.m. - 8 p.m., Potosi, Wis., (608) 763-2261.
- 9-10 St. Croix Valley Apple Festival, Hastings, Minn., (651) 437-7126.
- 9-10 Fall Festival of Arts and Wood Carvers Show, Red Wing, Minn., (651) 388-7569, 1-800-498-3444.
- 9-10 Minnesota Christmas in 1839, Sibley Historic Site, Mendota, Minn., (651) 452-1596.
- 9-10 Taste of Savanna, Savanna, Ill., (815) 273-2722.
- 9-10 Fall Festival, Fulton, Ill.
- 9-10 Autumn Crafts Fair, Galena, Ill., 1-800-747-937.
- 9-10 Pick-a-Pumpkin Days/Celebration of the Arts, Guttenberg, Iowa, (319) 252-2323.
- 9-10 Flea Market, Marquette, Iowa, 1-800-896-0910.
- 9-10 Leaf Arts and Crafts Festival, McGregor, Iowa, 1-800-896-0910.
- 10 Apple Festival, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., Mississippi Valley Welcome Center, LeClaire,

Iowa, (319) 289-3009.

- 10 Polish Applefest, Winona, Minn., (507) 454-3431.
- 16 La Crosse River Wetlands field trip, 10 a.m., bike trail parking lot, CTY B, (608) 784-3606.
- 16-17 Bird trip, Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, Trempealeau, Wis., (507) 452-2482.
- 19-21 Candlelight Tour, Fort Snelling, St. Paul, Minn., reservations, (612) 726-1171.
- 23-24 Husking Bee, Oliver Kelley Farm, Elk River, Wis., (612) 441-6896.
- 24 St. Andrew's Thomas Fall Festival, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m., Potosi, Wis., (608) 763-2261.
- 24-27 Oktoberfest, Bettendorf, Iowa, 1-800-747-7800.

November

- 6-7 Swan Watch Weekend, Winona, Minn., (507) 452-2272, 1-800-657-4972.
- 7 St. Donatus Pancake Breakfast, Bellevue, Iowa, 1-800-653-2211.
- 14 Holiday Tour of Homes, Prairie du

Chien, Iowa, 1-800-732-1673.

- 26 Old World Christmas, Savanna, Ill., (815) 273-2722.

Meetings & Hearings

October

- 14 Lower Wis. Riverway Board, 5 p.m., Village Hall, Wauzeka, Wis., 800-221-3792, (608) 739-3188.
- 15-16 Midwest Riverboat Buffs annual meeting, Hawkeye Restaurant, Keokuk, Iowa, 1-800-345-4692.

November

- 11 Lower Wis. Riverway Board, 5 p.m., Public Library, Lone Rock, Wis., 800-221-3792, (608) 739-3188.

Workshops & Conferences

October

- 5 River Mechanics Workshop, US Fish and Wildlife Service Conference Room Onalaska, Wis.
- 15-17 Women's Hunting Weekend, Eagle Bluff Environmental Center, Lanesboro, Minn., 1-888-800-9558. 📞



Almanac

By Kenny Salwey

First light illuminated a frosty spectacle across the lowland meadows and backwater marshes adjacent to the fog-choked Mississippi. Each blade of grass, cattail, arrowhead and smartweed plant looked like they were dipped in water, then sprinkled with powdered sugar.

The whistle of duck wings whispered across the water. Far off gunshots, barking and a shrill whistle betrayed the excitement of the hunt in the duck marshes.

As the October sun rose above the eastern hilltops, the fog did likewise and melting frost dissolved into droplets and trickles. Intricate spider webs laced between bushes and across tree branches shimmered and sparkled like fine gems.

By noon, my plaid wool shirt was my seat on the ground beneath a large swamp white oak. The deer, turkeys, woodducks and squirrels had left only a couple of acorns. Each breath of breeze brought multicolored leaves cartwheeling to earth. Now and then a mosquito woke me from my daydreams.

The sound of splashing led me to some northern pike chasing and eating a hapless school of minnows. A flock of crows and a couple of blue jays raised a ruckus harassing a barred owl in a tall cottonwood.

What a great day to enjoy the backwaters. Aye, my friend? 📞